PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

An Overview of Family & Children's Services 1989/1990

Family and Children's Services Division
Corporate Services Division
Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

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FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PROGRAM GOALS

Child Protection with a Family Focus

Families are responsible to ensure that their children are safe from abuse and neglect. If required, our intervention will assist families to fulfill this responsibility. Where this is not possible, an alternative safe and stable environment will be provided that assists children developing towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Services to Support Families

The family, extended family and community are responsible to ensure their children are free from abuse and neglect and provide them with a healthy and supportive environment. Ministry services will assist families to meet this responsibility.

Services to Youth

Youth will take responsibility for and be involved in planning their transition to independence. Ministry services will support youth and their families in making this transition.

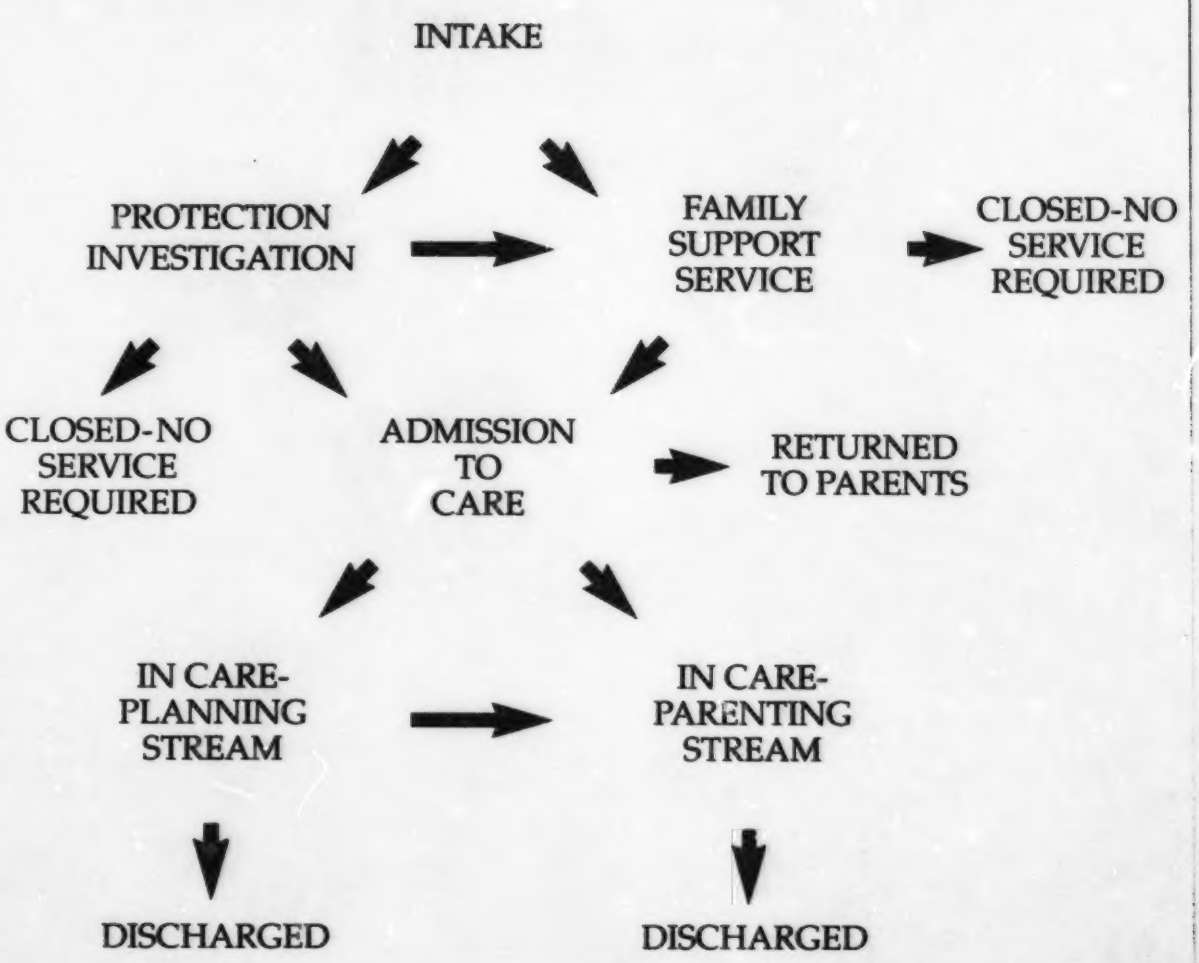
Native Child Welfare

Native people, through their Bands, Tribal Councils, organizations or from the community, will be involved in the development and be responsible for delivery of services to their children and families. Ministry services will reflect and respect the unique culture and heritage of Native people.

Adoption Services

Children who cannot live with their own parents or extended family will have the benefit of a permanent home through adoption. In planning the adoption, the child's culture and heritage will be respected. From pre-placement planning to the post adoption stage, Ministry services will ensure the long term security of the adoption placement.

FLOW BETWEEN F&CS SERVICE MODULES



ENVIRONMENT

Children

The distribution of children in B.C. through the various age groups determines the mix of Ministry services that is required.

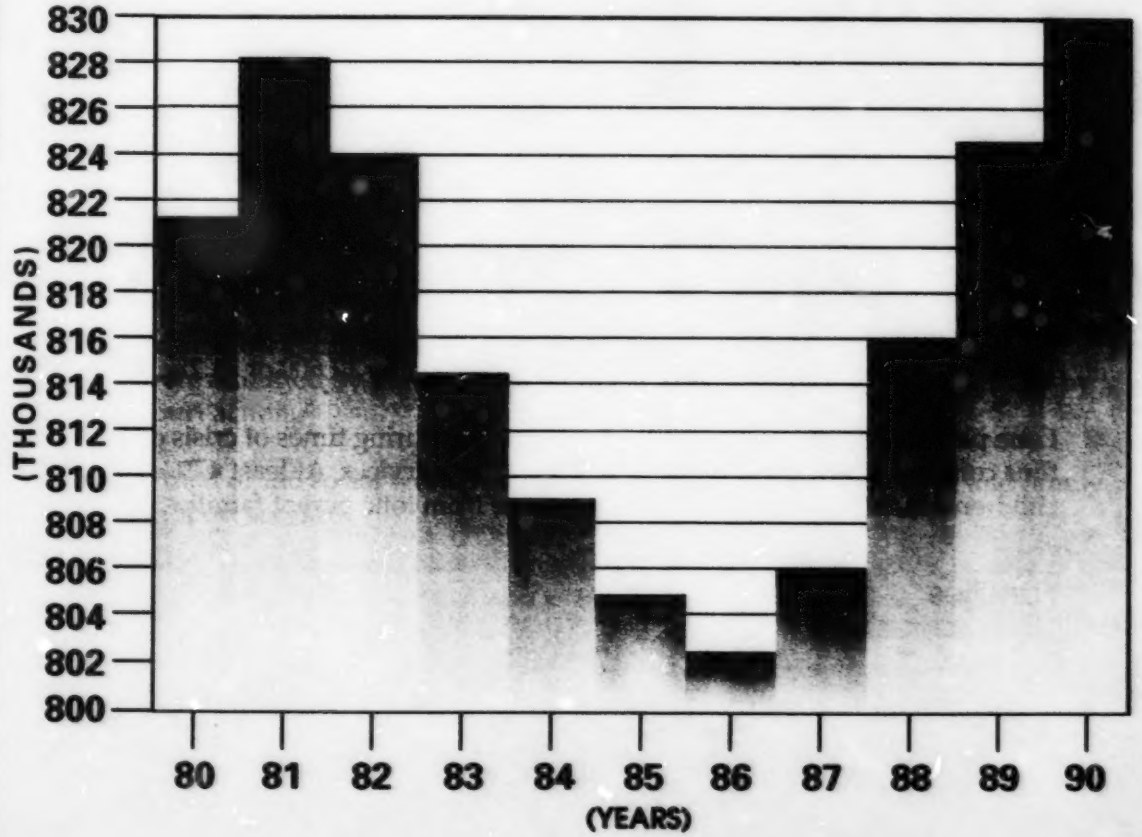
- After a number of years of decline, the child population in B.C. is again on the increase.
- The number of children in the 0 - 19 age group has increased by 28,300 or 3.5% since 1986. Last year the increase was 5,700 or 0.7%.
- The increasing trend is expected to continue over the next 10 years. By 1995, this age group will increase by a further 70,000 children and, by the year 2000, it is expected to increase by 120,000.
- The number of children in the 15 - 19 age group declined by 14.5% in the 10 years between 1980 and 1990, while the number of children in the 0 - 4 age group increased by a similar percentage.
- This suggests a decline in the need for services oriented toward teens and an increase in services oriented toward infants.

Child Population
(Thousands)

Age Group	1980	1990	% Change
0 - 4	185.9	212.9	+ 14.5%
5 - 9	189.1	210.8	+ 11.5%
10-14	205.1	199.5	- 2.7%
15 - 19	241.4	206.5	- 14.5%
Total	821.5	829.7	+ 1.0%

ENVIRONMENT

Population of Children



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

ENVIRONMENT

and Families

Although the size of the child population determines the number of children who are potentially at risk, it is the strength of the family that determines the proportion of that group that requires service.

- The latest estimates suggest that the total number of families with children has changed very little since the 1981 census. In 1989, there were 379,300 families, up by 1,000 or 0.3%.
- However, the apparent lack of change in the total hides some very profound changes in family structure.
- Between 1981 and 1989, the number of husband-wife families declined by 16,600 or 5.2%, while lone parent families increased by 17,600 or 31.2%.
- Lone parent families tend to be more vulnerable during times of crisis and thus consume a disproportionate amount of our services. At least 47% of children admitted to care, for example, come from lone parent families.

Families
(Thousands)

Type	1981	1989	% Change
Husband-Wife	321.9	305.3	-5.2%
Lone Parent	56.4	74.0	+31.2%
Total	378.3	379.3	+0.3%

PROTECTION

Overview

The Ministry is committed to assisting families to maintain their strength and independence. Thus, family support services are an integrated part of the process of insuring the safety and well being of children. Separation from the family only occurs where it becomes clear that the child's needs cannot be met within the family.

- There were 32,962 investigations, of possible abuse or neglect in 1989/90.
- As a result of these investigations 13,308 new or revised plans for family support were formulated.
- Admission to care totalled 6,160 during the year. Of these, 2,682 or 43.5% were admitted by parental agreement and 3,436 or 55.8% were admitted by court action.
- A total of 246 social workers are assigned to providing protective and family support services.

The Native Community

Native bands and tribal councils are increasingly interested in providing protection services to their own children. The Ministry is committed to assisting in this endeavour and has entered into agreements for the development of Indian Child and Family Services.

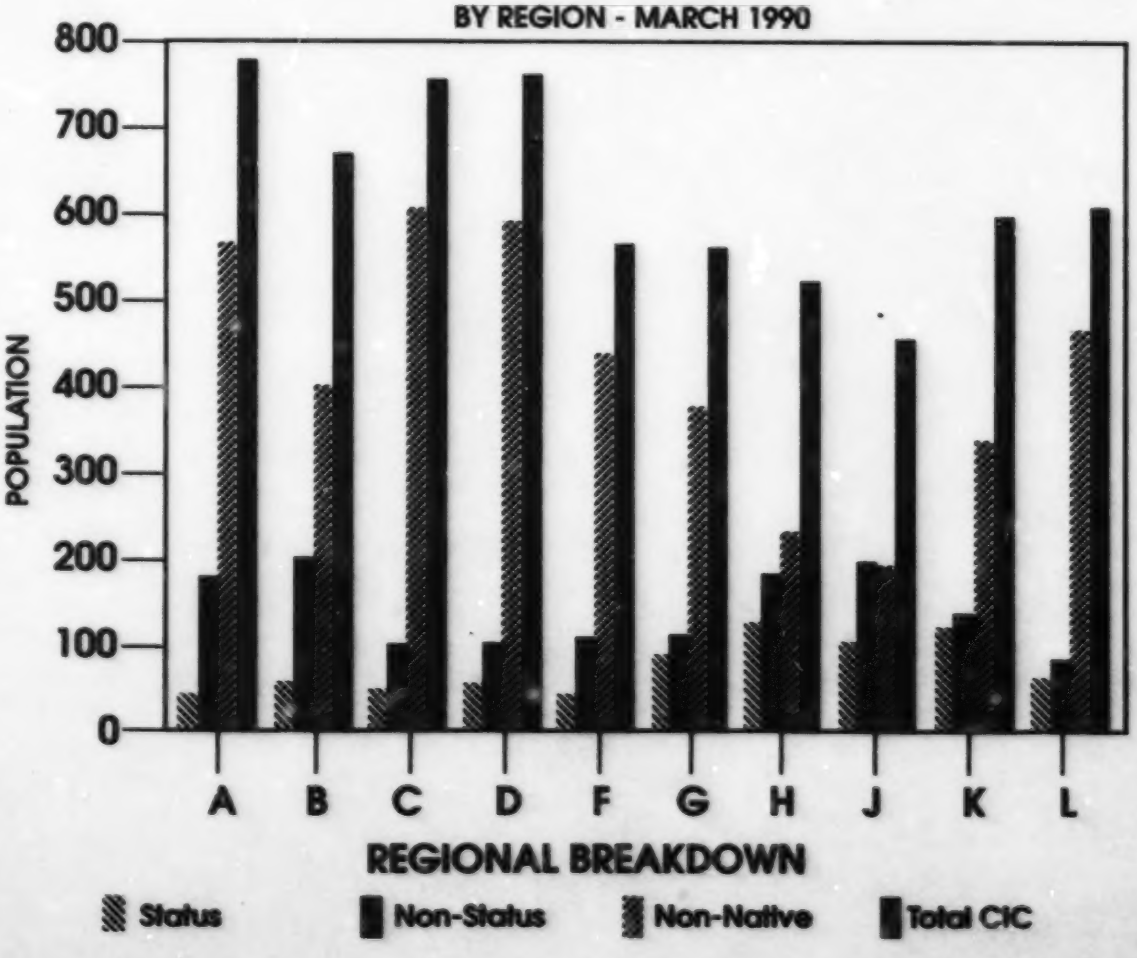
- Agreements have been successfully made with:

  1. Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council;
  2. MacLeod Lake Band;
  3. Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council; and
  4. Spallumcheen Band.

- In addition, the Ministry has introduced a unique special Native unit for family and children's services in Vancouver.

- The number of status Native children in care has decreased over the past two years. At the same time, there has been an increase in the overall population of status Native children in the province.

Native and Non-Native Children In Care



Investigation

Persons who have reason to believe that a child may be in need of protection are required to make this information known to the Ministry. Upon receipt of such information, an investigation is undertaken to determine if support or protective service is required.

- The Ministry undertook 32,962 investigations during 1989/90, of which 5,768 involved more than one office.
- This represented an increase in activity of 21.8% over the previous year.
- Neglect was the most frequently cited complaint - followed by sexual abuse and physical abuse.
- The incidence of complaints about more complex cases, involving multiple types of abuse, increased by 43.6% over the previous year.

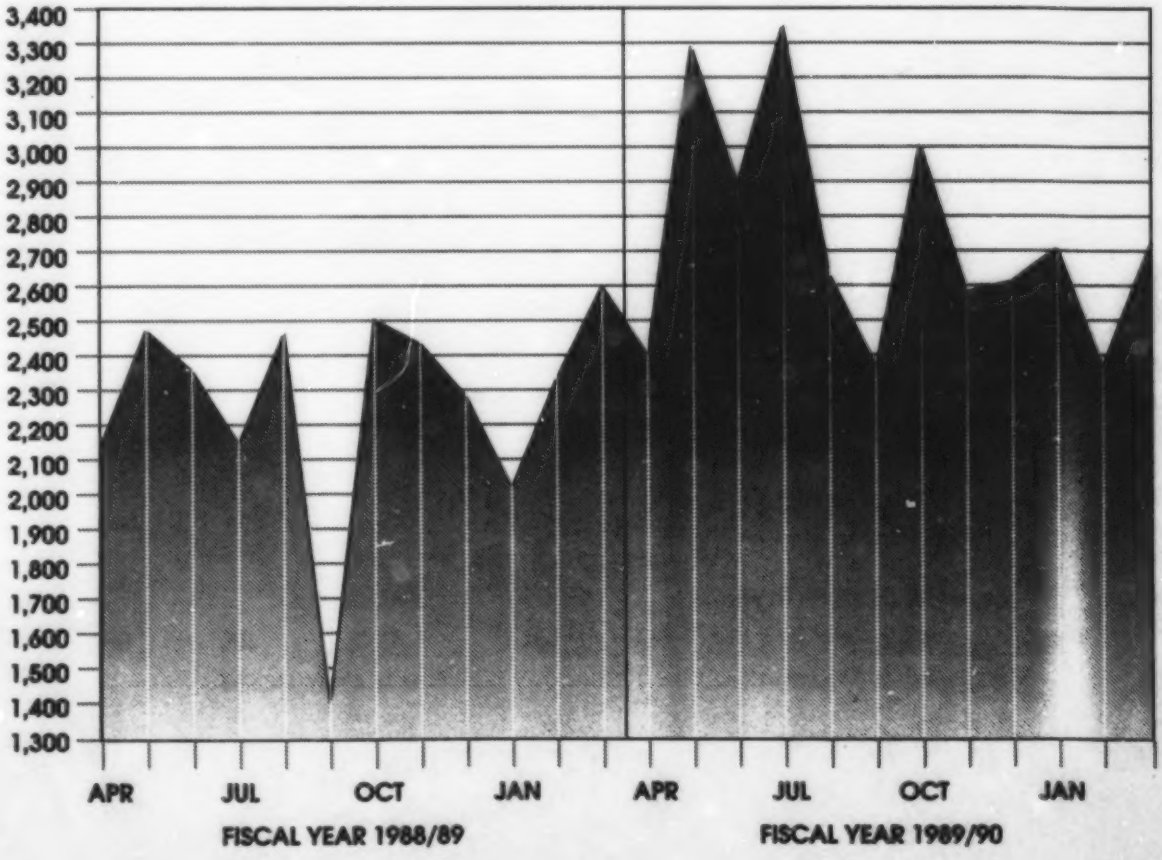
Protection Investigations

Type	1988/89	1989/90	% Change
Physical Abuse	5,338	6,500	+21.8%
Sexual Abuse	6,101	6,943	+13.8%
Neglect	8,038	9,340	+16.2%
Other*	4,575	5,860	+28.1%
Multiple Types	3,007	4,319	+43.6%
Total	27,059	32,962	+21.8%

* Other includes such problems as emotional abuse, teenage children at large, orphaned children, etc.

PROTECTION

Investigation



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

PROTECTION

Family Support Services

The Ministry offers a variety of family support services to assist families to function independently and enable children to remain within their own families and communities.

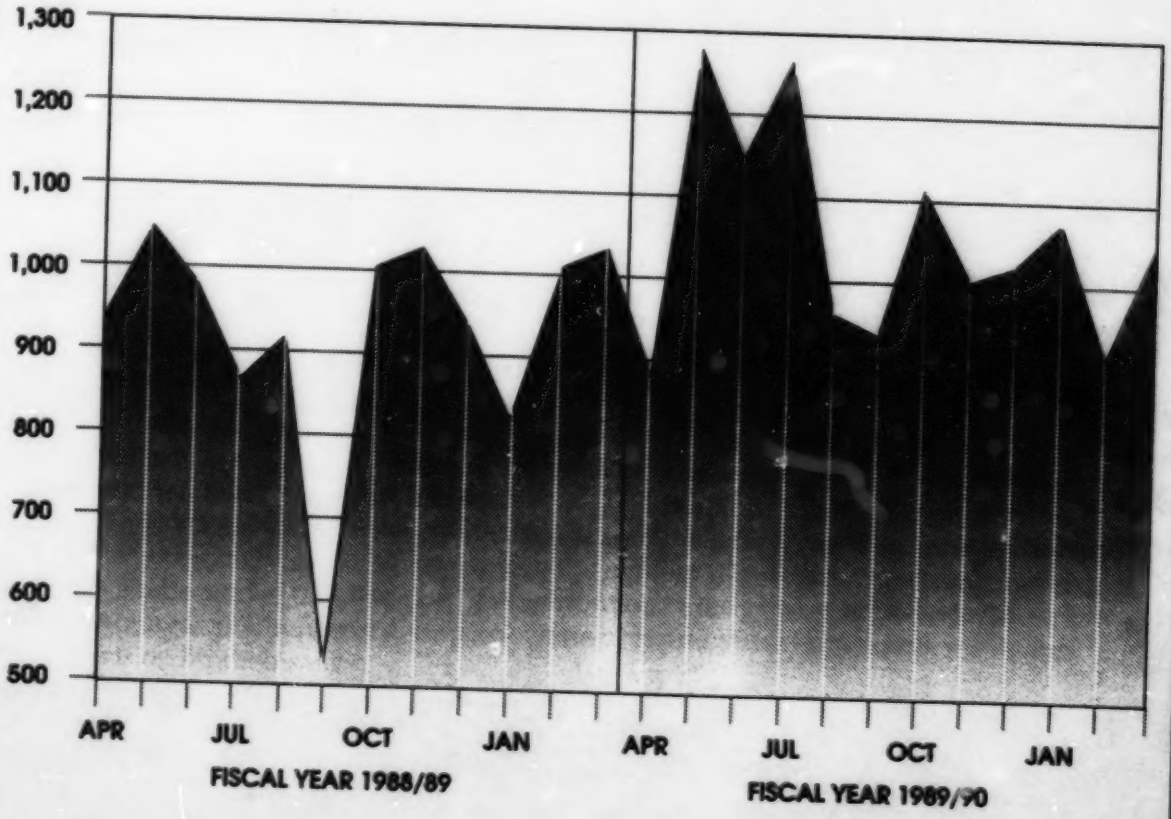
- As a result of its investigations, the Ministry formulated 13,308 new or revised service plans for supporting families - an increase of 12.6% over the previous year.
- As in previous years, most of the plans (69.4%) involve the establishment of a Family Service file which will be managed by Ministry staff.
- The largest growth, however, was in referrals to collateral agencies which grew by 45% over the previous year. This likely reflects the increased availability of services provided by such programs as Families First.

Family Support Service

Service Plan	1988/89	1989/90	% Change
Open Family Service File	8,935	9,236	+ 3.4%
Refer to Collateral Agency	2,453	3,562	+ 45.2%
Open F&CS File & Refer	430	510	+ 18.6%
Total	11,818	13,308	+12.6%

PROTECTION

Family Support Services



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

PROTECTION

Family Support Services

Selected Program Statistics 1989/90

Children's Rehabilitation Resources	- 5,490 children served during school year.
Family Support Homemakers	- 2,043 families and individuals served per month.
Special Services to Children & Families	- 1,506 children served per month.
Intermittent (Respite) Care	- 666 children served per month.
Supervision of Returned Children	- 356 children supervised per month.

Admission to Care

The Ministry is committed to maintaining children in their own family wherever possible. Where it is determined that it is not possible to provide for the safety and needs of a child within the family, the child may be admitted to the care of the Superintendent. When possible this is accomplished with the co-operation and agreement of the parents.

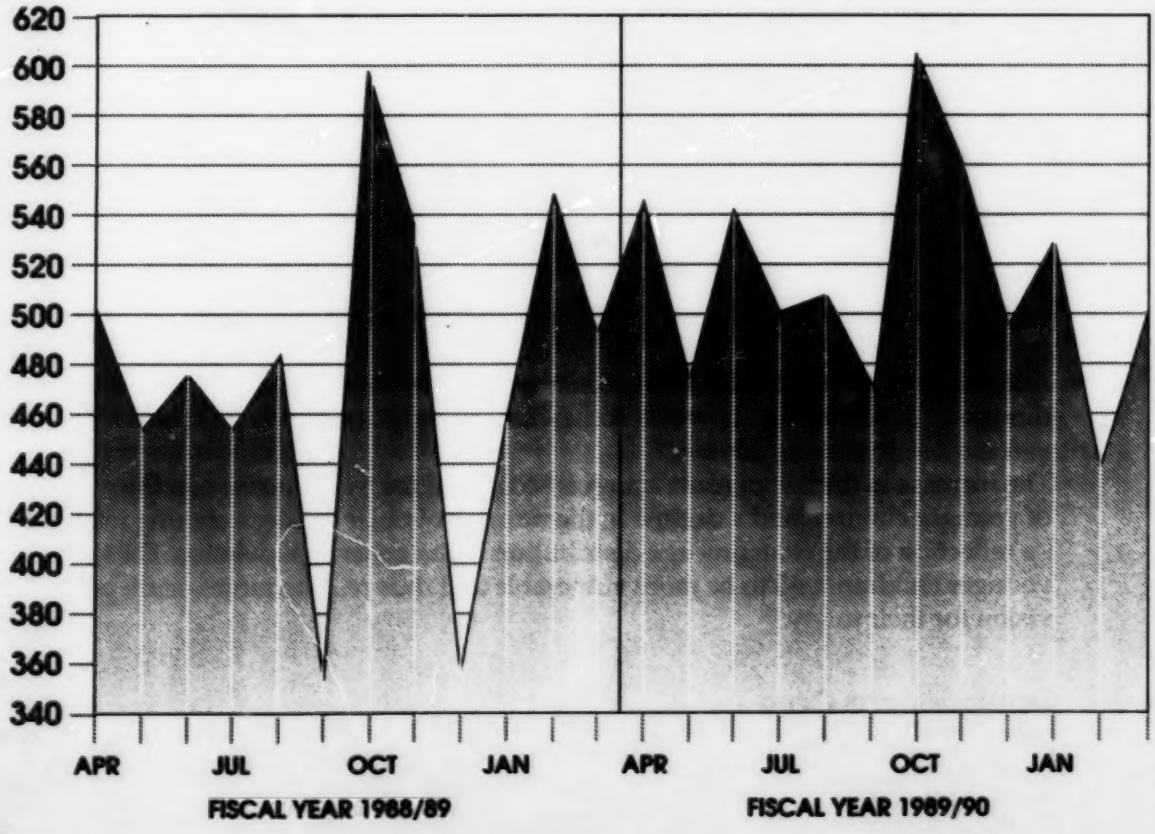
- Admissions to care totalled 6,160 during the 1989/90 fiscal year - up 8.1% over the previous year.
- Admission by parental agreement numbered 2,682 or 43.5% of total admissions this represented an increase of 5.3% over the previous year.
- Admission by court action came to 3,436 or 55.8% of the total admissions - at 10.8%, this mode of admission showed a somewhat larger increase over the previous year.
- The increase in the use of court action is accounted for by an increase in the number of younger children and a decline in the number of older children coming into care - a reflection of the changing age distribution in the general population. These younger children tend to be more vulnerable and thus require more secure provision for their safety.

Admissions to Care

Type	1988/89	1989/90	% Change
Parental Agreement	2,546	2,682	+ 5.3%
Court Action	3,102	3,436	+ 10.8%
Other Province/Country	49	42	- 8.5%
Total	5,697	6,160	+ 8.1%

PROTECTION

Admissions to Care



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

CHILDREN IN CARE

Overview

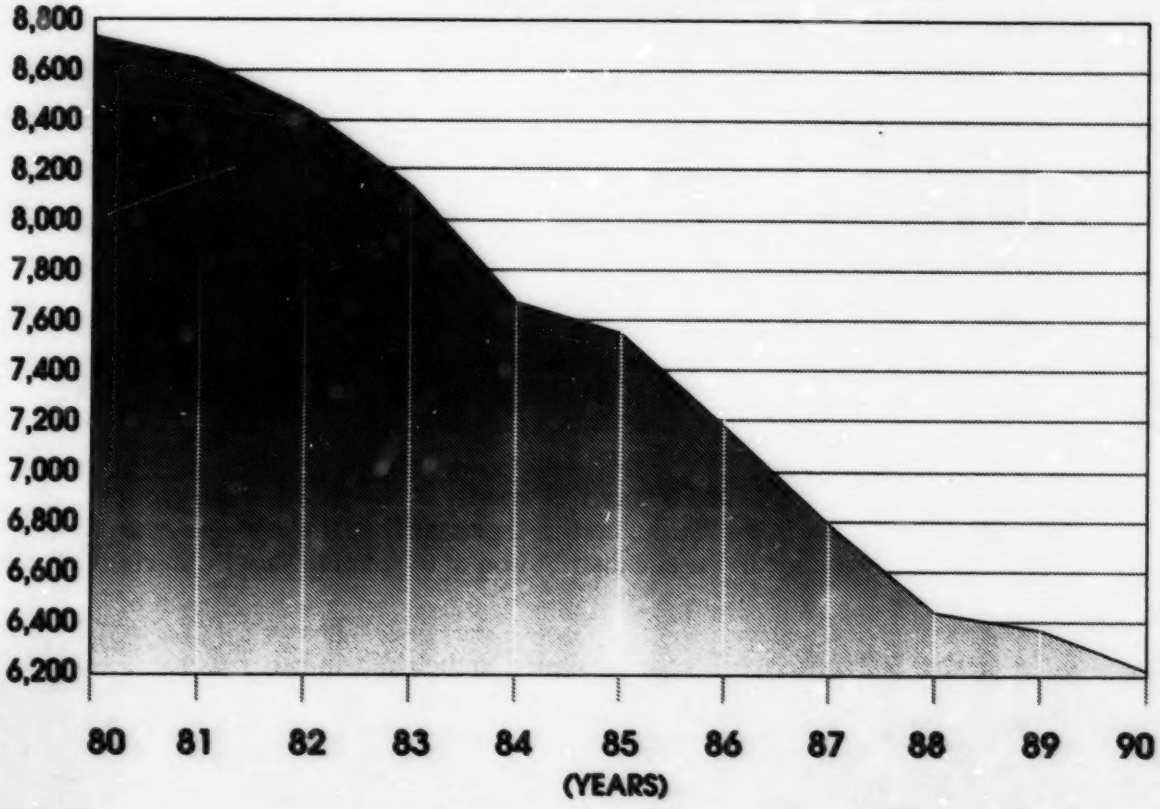
The primary objective of the child-in-care program is to provide good substitute parenting for children who are unable to live with their own families. Emphasis is placed on planning for these children to assure that both their short and long term needs are met.

- The long term decline in the number of children in care continued during the 1989/90 fiscal year. On March 31, 1990, there were 6,224 children in care - down by 2.4% from the end of the previous year.
- Although there was an increase in the number of admissions to care, the caseload declined because of an even larger increase in the number of discharges from care.
- The increase in admissions occurred primarily in the younger age groups, while the increase in discharges occurred primarily in the teen age groups - reflecting the change in the age distribution of the overall provincial child population.
- A total of 307 social workers are assigned to the child-in-care program.

Children in Care

Age Group	Mar.31, 1989	Mar.31, 1990	% Change
0 - 4 years	936	986	+ 5.3%
5 - 9 years	807	901	+11.6%
10 - 14 years	1,698	1,641	- 3.4%
15 - 19 years	2,935	2,696	- 8.1%
Total	6,376	6,224	- 2.4%

CHILDREN IN CARE



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

CHILDREN IN CARE

Planning Stream*

The Ministry's goal is to work with parents, whenever possible, towards the return of their children. Where this is not possible, attempts are made to place the child within the extended family or in an alternate permanent home. This type of intensive service is handled by workers in a specialized planning stream.

- The planning stream shows considerable month-to-month variability because it contains all the new and short term children in care.
- Despite the decline in the overall children in care caseload, the average number of children in the planning stream increased marginally to 4,086 cases during 1989/90.
- Although this increase was a modest 0.2% - these cases now make up 67.1% of the total CIC caseload.
- A total of 254.5 social workers are assigned to the planning stream.

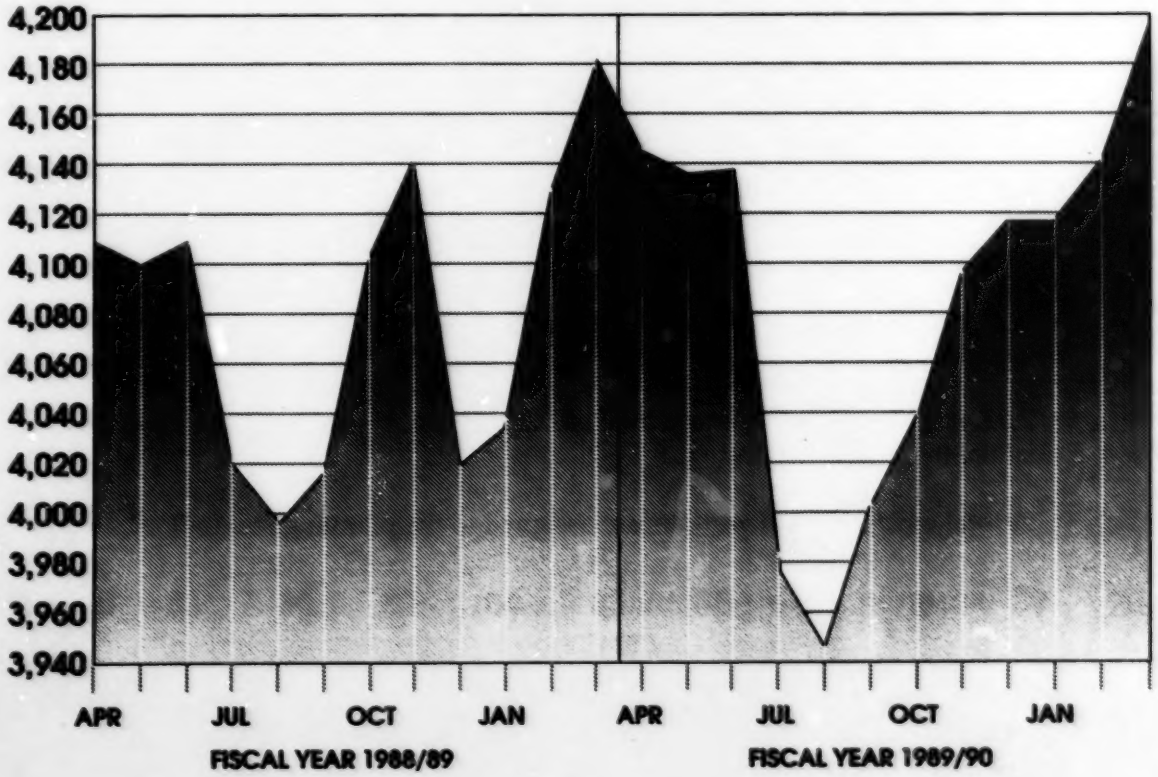
Children in Care - Planning Stream

	1988/89	1989/90	% Change
Average Number of Children	4,079	4,086	+ 0.2%
Percent of Total Caseload	64.3%	67.1%	+ 2.8%

* Included in this stream are all children in care except permanent wards 12 years of age and older.

CHILDREN IN CARE

Planning Stream



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch

CHILDREN IN CARE

Parenting Stream*

Where it proves to be impossible to return a child to the immediate or extended family, the Ministry concentrates on providing good substitute parenting and on preparing the child for eventual independence. This type of service is handled by workers in the parenting stream.

- The number of children in the parenting stream has been declining steadily - along with the decline in the number of teenagers.
- During 1989/90, an average of 2,099 cases were served - down by 7.4% over the previous year.
- The decline in the parenting cases accounts for the total decline in the overall children in care caseload - they now make up 33.9% of the caseload, down from 35.7% last year.
- A social work staff of 52.5 workers are assigned to the parenting stream.

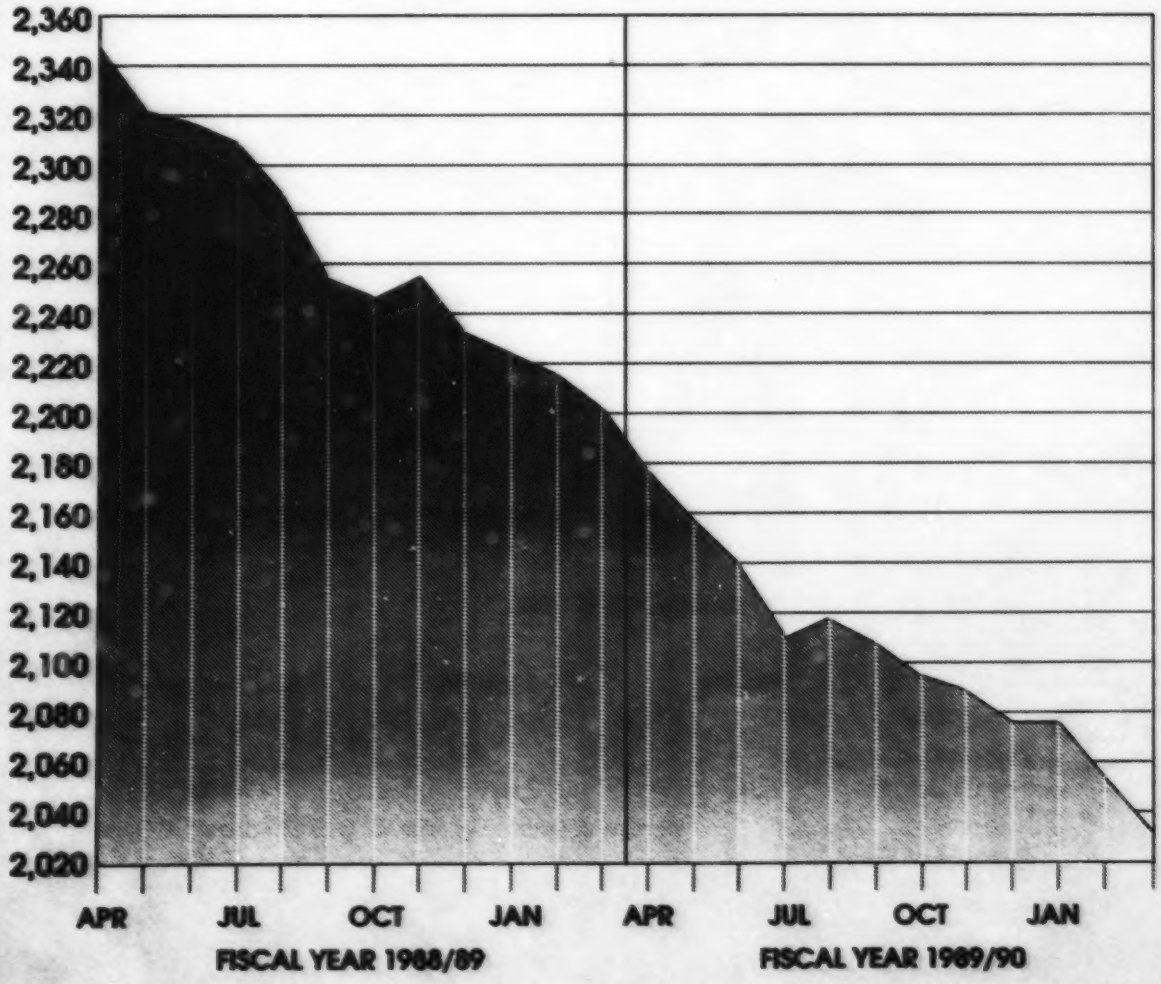
Children in Care - Parenting Stream

	1988/89	1989/90	% Change
Average Number of Children	2,267	2,099	- 7.4%
Percent of Total Caseload	35.7%	33.9%	- 1.8%

*Includes all permanent wards 12 years of age and older.

CHILDREN IN CARE

Parenting Stream



Source: Research, Evaluation and Statistics Branch